

The whole family is welcome at our
APPLE PRESSING DAY
on **Saturday 5th October 2019**
from **11am to 3pm.**

IN THE WOODLAND (behind Crossfields)
plus apple peeling, apple bobbing, apple-themed
crafts, with teas & coffees, hot dogs, burgers and
crepes available to buy at modest prices!

All the fun of the AUTUMNAL FAIR!
Bring a box/bag/barrowful of apples plus a
plastic bottle, so that you can take home
your own fresh-pressed juice!



Email to: info@tarvincommunitywoodland.org

Tarvin 740337

Church Cottage,
Church Street,
Tarvin.
Chester

September 2019

Dear friends,

Here is our latest woodland newsletter covering future events this autumn and a number of the issues Trustees are currently considering; please share your views with us. Our quiet summer period is coming to an end and in September, the Volunteers and Trustees will again resume maintenance and development activities; our "grass cutter" John Daines has never stopped by the way! In the meantime here are a few thoughts, perhaps more philosophical than usual, on the wider value of our woodland to the community.

In recent months the academic and popular press, followed by broadcast media, have been highlighting the benefits of active and passive use of green spaces on the health and wellbeing of their users. Much of this commentary sometimes attracts cynicism in some quarters but it is clear that access to nature and outdoor activities bring very real benefits, physically and mentally. At our local level we like to believe our woodland provides a safe environment for modest exercise, access to wider walks and certainly an environmental stimulus to learn about local flora and fauna which we have created particularly with young people from the school in mind.

As a regular woodland user (dog walker), I personally appreciate its benefits and the chance to share them with other woodland users who have become good friends and acquaintances. Please join us and share our vision and activities with others.

With best wishes to all our readers and supporters. We, the trustees, look forward to meeting you at the apple pressing and coffee morning events.

S.F. Exell.

Stuart Exell

Chairman of Tarvin Community Woodland Trust

Join us for our Autumn fundraising
COFFEE MORNING
and Raffle.
at **Tarvin Methodist Church**
between **10.00am and Noon**
on **Saturday 19th October 2019.**
Trustees will be there to talk about
the development of **YOUR** woodland.
Please come along and support us!



Our TENTH GREEN FLAG!

The quality mark for public open spaces, the Green Flag (Community) is awarded to those spaces which are voluntary-maintained, as is our woodland.

We are pleased (and very proud) to be able to tell you that our application for Green Flag status for our woodland has been successful once again this year. This is the tenth Green Flag that has been awarded to us and our on-going achievement is a great tribute to the team of volunteers who, week in and week out, come rain or come shine, go out into the woodland to do all of the tasks that are necessary. It is entirely thanks to their efforts that the woodland is maintained to the very high standard required for the award of the Green Flag. Thank you all. The whole of Tarvin is grateful to you.

The tale of Stinking Willie.

This Scottish name may not be familiar to you, but it is a particularly apt descriptor for Ragwort: the tall plant with bright orange/yellow flowers (and a very peculiar smell) that is so often seen in verges and, at times, in fields. It is reckoned to be amongst the top ten nectar plants for insects and has 30 species of insect that feed specifically on ragwort alone, including the caterpillars of the endangered cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*). However, when growing in fields and once cut and harvested in hay, they are very poisonous to any animals that eat them. For this reason, ragwort is classed as a pernicious weed and, by law, has to be removed from farmland. Animals will not eat the living plants – they are deterred by the very distinctive smell. Any ragwort plants growing in our woodland could not come anywhere near stock animals and so could not possibly damage them – but they are invaluable to our insect life. This is a classic example of a weed being a plant in the wrong place: in a farmers hay field, ragwort is a pernicious weed and must be removed but in our woodland, it could support a diverse range of insects and so would be a valuable contributor to a balanced ecology. Over the past few years, ragwort has been eliminated from much of our woodland but we intend setting aside a closely monitored area at the top of the Saxon Heath area of the woodland in which any Ragwort plants will be left for the benefit of both our insects and the creatures that depend upon them. This is a small change but an important one.

The problem presented by our grey squirrels

Running a woodland involves caring for all of the living things to which it is home - we must care for our animals as well as our trees and plants. However, our most plentiful most-frequently seen animal, the grey squirrel, has always provided (and is still providing) the Trustees with difficult problems. In the early days of the woodland, many wooden bird boxes were installed but we found that such simple devices were no deterrent to the grey squirrels, which are omnivores – eating both plants and animals – and their sharp teeth made short work of the wooden boxes, gnawing their way in and then making a meal of the brood of chicks that were within. We found an answer in the form of the 'Woodcrete' bird boxes, which are robust enough to defeat even the strong teeth of squirrels. Such boxes are expensive, but Tarvin folk have stepped up to the mark and, thus far, have sponsored the cost of half of the boxes that are to be seen in the woodland.

We are now facing up to another serious problem. Our grey squirrels have been gnawing the bark of our trees. You may think that trees have a lot of bark and the loss of a bit of it really doesn't matter much. However, like the results of damaging our own skin, a gap in the bark of a tree provides a way for pathogens to get into the tree. The protection from the airborne bacteria and fungi which can infect it having gone, the tree becomes vulnerable to diseases which will at least undermine its health and at worst might cause the tree's death.

But that isn't all. The trunk of a tree is used to do a number of different things. One is that it provides the means whereby water and minerals can be moved up from the roots to the growing leaves, where they enable the leaves to make sugars (the tree's food) and these help it to grow. It also enables some of that food to pass back down from the leaves into the roots, thereby keeping the cells of the roots alive. The 'tubes' that do this are located just beneath the tree's bark and, when a squirrel gnawing through the bark results in these 'tubes' being disconnected, the sugars are unable to get down to the cells of the roots, which consequently die. If the roots die, the whole tree will die. Since our woodland is, first and foremost, about trees, we cannot allow them to be killed by the squirrels.

Somehow, we have to limit our population of squirrels. It has been suggested that 5 squirrels per hectare is a supportable population density. How we get to that figure has not yet been decided – but get to it we must! We have to find a way to reduce the squirrel numbers and this will be the subject of much debate at future Trustees' meetings.

Our new notice boards.

One of the ways in which the Trust communicates with the community it serves is by means of the woodland notice boards. When, many years ago, Delamere Forest were replacing their “worn out” notice boards, Jim Grogan jumped in and offered to give them a new home in Tarvin. For 20-odd years, they have stood in the woodland – one at the Broomheath Lane and the other at the Hockenhull Lane gateways – but, gradually, their condition has deteriorated until replacement has become essential. The cash provided by Taylor Wimpey for us to equip the Saxon Heath area of the woodland included money to purchase a new notice board. This was commissioned from craftsman cabinet Maker Tony Gibbs and was on view at Tarvin Fete, prior to its installation in the woodland, where it can be seen set up and working hard opposite Fairfax Avenue. The quality of Tony’s work is such that Trustees had no hesitation in asking him to undertake whatever refurbishment or replacement work is needed to renew the two original boards. The old board at Broomheath Lane fell apart when dismantling began and so the task may be rather more extensive than originally envisaged. However, at the end of the process, we will have a set of boards that will very probably outlast most of the present Trustees! And, just as Derek Rawden’s renovation of the “Countryside & Wildlife Award 2000” signs has produced something that is arguably better than the original, so with the notice boards we are steadily improving the fittings of the woodland. What was the cod-psychology mantra of the 1930s? – “Every day, in every way (our woodland) gets better and better!”

Woodland Totem Poles.

Anyone who has taken a walk through the ‘Crossfields’ section of our woodland since the beginning of July cannot fail to have noticed that, in amongst the apple trees in our ‘orchard’, there are two very large and very colourful totem poles. These have been made and painted by the boys of the 1st Tarvin Cub Pack and they are a part of the 2019 “Big Art” project. Within the woodland, the poles are a totally unexpected ‘find’ and their highly-coloured incongruity makes them stand out even more from their very green surroundings. It was in the spring when Cub Leader Sophie Marks approached the Trustees for permission to display the finished totems within our woodland. I think it is fair to say that none of the Trustees anticipated a finished result of such quality. Well done, Cubs! We all hope that they survive the passage of time, so that they can be there to watch over our apple pressing on Saturday 5th October 2019.

Tarvin Apple Pressing Day

This is held on the first Saturday in October in “The Orchard” within Tarvin Woodland. This is a day which is intended to be good fun for the village and its families and is intended by the Trust to be revenue-neutral (in other words, we aren’t trying to make a profit!) The notion is that families can come along with bags, buckets or barrows-full of apples and be involved in their being chopped up and pressed, so that the juice can be drunk there and then or, if suitable PLASTIC bottles have also been brought, it can be taken away. (However, if it is kept for long, it is likely to ferment and may not taste as good.) With three presses working, there will be lots going on and the children will be busy. Add to that the table of suitably-themed activities and crafts for the youngsters and there should be plenty of time for parents to ‘catch up’ with their friends. Because it goes on between 11.00am and 3.00pm (in other words, over lunchtime), we have always provided both drinks and hot refreshments – but at prices which aim merely to cover our costs. We don’t want to make a profit but, because all of our money has been given by Tarvin people to help us to run the woodland, we must avoid running at a loss.

Additionally this year, there will also be a stall selling crepes to raise money for the Christmas market. Because the market is so expensive to set up each year, the team must raise the cash to enable them to close the road, set up the insurance and hire the stalls, before ever they can begin to organise the event in detail. Selling their tasty pancakes whenever possible will help to raise some of that cash and the Trust is delighted to be able to help them in this way.

So, make a date with your family, with your young relatives and your young friends to come along to **Tarvin Apple Pressing Day** on **Saturday 5th October 2019** between **11.00am and 3.00pm** at the **Tarvin Community Woodland Orchard (behind Crossfields)**. Enjoyment for all guaranteed!

(Incidentally, if you have lots of apples which you don't want, just let us know - our contact details are on the front of the leaflet - and we'll happily collect them for use on the day. All offers gratefully received. And, afterwards, you can be assured that all of the materials will be entirely organically recycled!)